

## Handout #1: Substance Dualism

### I. Cartesian Dualism

The substance dualist holds that:

- (sd1) Minds are identical to simple, indivisible, immaterial substances.
- (sd2) There is mental-to-physical and physical-to-mental causation.

#### What is a substance?

- Substances are enduring objects that may undergo change in their (non-essential) properties.
- Contrast substances with things like shadows and Chesire-cat grins – things whose existence/instantiation depend on independent substances.

### II. Rene Descartes' Epistemological Project<sup>1</sup>

Descartes' goal: to rest his belief system on firm foundations.

The test: if a belief is not certain, then treat it as false.

- e.g. Descartes' belief that he is sitting in front of the fireplace in his robe is not certain, as he cannot rule out that his perceptual experience is the product of (e.g.) a dream.

Although we are not concerned with Descartes' epistemological project, one of his thought experiments has been mined for reasons to think substance dualism is true:

#### The Evil Demon scenario

- I do not have a material body.
- All my sensory impressions as of an external world are the product of a powerful Evil Demon's machinations.
- Any sensory evidence I have for any proposition about the empirical world can be duplicated by the Evil Demon, with the result that no empirical proposition is certain.

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<sup>1</sup> From the Second Meditation in *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1642).

### III. The Conceivability Argument

- (1) My body has the property: being essentially extended.
- (2) My mind does not have the property: being essentially extended.
- (3) Therefore, my mind  $\neq$  my body.

Justification for (1): It is *a priori* that bodies – material objects – are the sort of thing that have spatial extension. Try to conceive a body that is not extended in space.

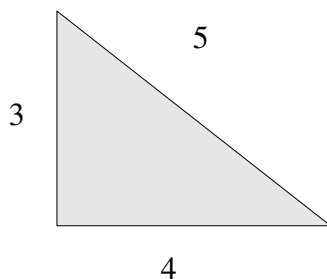
Justification for (2): We can conceive of the ED world without any (obvious?) contradiction. And since conceivability entails possibility, it is possible that I exist purely as a non-physical mind. If it is possible that I exist without extension, then obviously I am not essentially extended in space.

Justification for (3): Leibniz's Law (also called the Indiscernability of Identicals), a basic principle of logic which states that for all objects  $x, y$  if  $x = y$ , then  $x$  and  $y$  share all the same properties. [Equivalently: if  $x$  and  $y$  do not share all the same properties, then  $x$  and  $y$  are not identical]

Formal statement of LL:  $\forall x \forall y [(x = y) \rightarrow (Fx \leftrightarrow Fy)]$

### IV. Criticism of the Conceivability Argument

A. Antoine Arnauld (1612-94): the justification for premise (2) is erroneous. Conceivability is not a sure-guide to possibility. Consider the right triangle:



It is easy to conceive of a right triangle with sides of lengths 3, 4 and hypotenuse 5 (either imaginatively or descriptively). This triangle satisfies the Pythagorean theorem,  $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$ , which is a necessary truth governing all right triangles.

But now conceive of a right triangle with sides 9, 10, and hypotenuse 11. . . . wait, that's an impossible object! So it looks like mere conceivability is not sufficient for possibility.



Or consider the “impossible” cube from Escher.

## V. The Argument from Doubt

- (1) I can rationally doubt that my body exists.
- (2) I cannot rationally doubt that my mind exists.
- (3) So my body  $\neq$  my mind.

Justification for (1): The ED thought experiment.

Justification for (2): Descartes’ cogito considerations. Even if the Evil Demon can fool me into thinking that I have a material body when I don’t, he cannot fool me into thinking there is no thinking I. Being duped requires a dupee.

Justification for (3): Leibniz’ Law, with the distinguishing property: *being rationally doubted by me to exist*.

## VI. Criticism of the Argument From Doubt

Stage 1: The argument is an instance of an invalid form.

- (1) Jones doubts that Samuel Clemens is an author.
- (2) Jones does not doubt that Mark Twain is an author.
- (3) So Samuel Clemens  $\neq$  Mark Twain.

In order for Stage 1 to work, the premises must be true and the conclusion false. The conclusion is obviously false and we can tell a story in which the premises come out true.

Stage 2: A Fregean Diagnosis (employing the ideas of Gottlob Frege 1848 - 1925)

A. Some Fregean theses:

(F1) Corresponding to each word there is a *sense* and a *reference*.

(F2) Sense determines reference. (↗ stands for *expresses*; ↘ stands for *determines*)

the sense/concept WATER  
'water' ↗ ↘ water

the sense/concept GEORGE W BUSH  
'George W. Bush' ↗ ↘ George Bush

(F3) Reference does not determine sense. It is possible for two expressions to express distinct senses/concepts even though they refer to the same entity.

THE MUMBLING TOWN DRUNK  
'Samuel Clemens' ↗ ↘ MT aka SC

THE FAMOUS AUTHER OF *Huck Finn*  
'Mark Twain' ↗ ↘ MT aka SC

B. The moral

Even though the following is true,

- ♦ Jones believes that Mark Twain is a author.
- ♦ Jones does not believe that Samuel Clemens is an author.

it does not follow that

- ♦ Mark Twain ≠ Samuel Clemens (which is necessarily false).

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Analogously, even though the following is true:

- ♦ Descartes doubts that his body/brain exists.
- ♦ Descartes does not doubt that his mind exists.

it does not follow that

- ♦ Descartes' body/brain  $\neq$  Descartes' mind.